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A BOY SKATING ON A CANAL. PAGE 23.

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

HOLLAND

BY

BEATRIX JUNGMAN

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

BY

NICO JUNGMAN

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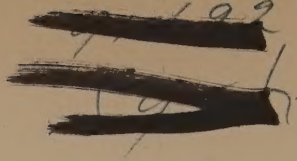

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HOLLAND

CHAPTER I

THE COUNT AND THE ROBBERS

In the centuries before Julius Cæsar rose to be the greatest ruler in the world, Holland was little but a tract of marshy ground covered with thick forests. It was enclosed between the two arms which the Rhine holds out as she throws herself into the sea. This small tract of land was then called Batavia, and was mostly composed of the earth and débris which the Rhine continually deposits at the end of her journey from Switzerland.

This was but a part of the country which we hear of in history as the Netherlands. You will say we hear of the Netherlands still, for that is but another name for Holland, and you are perfectly right. Holland and the Netherlands are now the same thing, but in old days the Netherlands meant much more than that: it included all the land now comprised by the modern kingdom of Belgium; and when we speak of the

Netherlands in the earlier pages of this book it means the country which became Belgium as well as that which became Holland.

From the earliest times the men of this country directed their energies towards the protection of the land given them by the Rhine and continually attacked by the sea. Julius Cæsar made these people his allies, and they remained faithful to Rome until the close of the dominion. The great Emperor Charlemagne was descended from their race, and they came under his control at the fall of the Roman Empire. Charlemagne interfered very little with their customs. He was nominally their lord, but the country was in reality cut up into many little kingdoms, which were ruled by chiefs who were answerable to the great King.

During the reign of his immediate successors, the Netherlands became more and more independent. During the early Middle Ages, it was cut up into many divisions, each governed by some noble whose whole time was taken up by fighting with his neighbours, and who very often governed harshly, compelling all the able-bodied men to become soldiers. There were, of course, exceptions amongst these tyrannical lords, and there are legends telling of the kindness with which some of them treated their subjects.

In the twelfth century lived a certain Count Bordewyn, whose fathers had reigned for many years before him. He was the lord of Bruges, which town, in those days, was one of the most important centres of the Netherlands, and he was a kind and good man, whose only thought was to make his people happy. So that

they might not be afraid to tell him their needs, he went about among them dressed as a farmer and a peasant, and they, thinking he was one of themselves, spoke out freely in his presence. One night he left his castle, and, poorly dressed, went out into the country to see if there was any good he could do. It was a dark, cold night, and after walking for some time he was glad to see the lights of a house in the distance. When he reached the building he knocked at the door and went in. He found himself at a wedding-party, given by a farmer whose daughter had been married that day. The good Count was very happy to be of the party, and without letting the people know who he was, he sat down with them and sang and feasted. It was very late when they, much against their will, let him leave them, and he walked back through the lonely country, making plans for his people's happiness.

Suddenly he heard a whistle, and five men rushed out from a clump of trees and threw themselves upon him. The Count struggled to the trees, set his back against one, and prepared to fight. The robbers were armed with knives, but the Count had only a big stick. On they rushed at him. He struck at the first one with all his strength, and hit him so hard that he fell to the ground. Another one crept up to his side, and would have cut his head open, but the Count turned quickly and, catching the stroke on his stick, snatched the knife from the robber's hand, and with a blow sent him to join his comrade senseless on the ground. This left three against one, and the Count felt his strength giving way under their blows. Still,

full of courage, he swung the stick round his head to keep the wretches at a distance, and, as loudly as he could, he prayed to God to send him help. At this moment he saw dimly silhouetted against the darkness a human figure. In its hands it wielded a strange weapon, which fell again and again, whistling through the air, on the heads and shoulders of the three bandits, until they took to their heels and ran. At first the Count thought it was some angel from heaven come to his help, but as the figure drew nearer he saw it was a farmer, and the mysterious weapon a flail.

The Count and the farmer embraced each other, and for a moment did not speak. Then said the Count:

"My brave fellow! How can I thank you? You have saved my life!"

But the farmer would not listen to his thanks.

"No, no!" said he. "I have only done what you would have done for me in the same circumstances, and nothing more need be said. I take it that you are a merchant earning a living for your wife and family, as I try to do for mine."

But the Count insisted that the farmer should ask some favour.

"Listen!" said he. "I am in the service of the Count, and perhaps can do you some great good."

For a time the farmer was silent, and then, hesitating very much, he told the Count his dearest wish.

"For thirty years I have worked on a piece of land; with this flail I have beaten the corn, and I have loved my farm as my child. Yesterday my master died, and

the land will pass into strange hands, and out of my care."

The Count had listened quietly to his story, and at last he spoke :

"But, my friend, this is not such a difficult matter. How would you like the land for your own?"

The poor farmer wept with emotion.

"Really, is it possible that you have such influence?" said he.

"Come to the castle to-morrow," said the Count, "and ask for the Captain of the Guard."

And the farmer, mystified and wondering, went slowly home. When his wife opened the door she was very angry with him for being so late ; but Cornelius—that was the farmer's name—explained what had happened, and although the wife could scarcely believe that such good fortune could be theirs, yet they went to bed so full of hope, that they could not sleep all night.

At daybreak Cornelius dressed in his best and set off for the castle, followed by the prayers and blessings of his wife. When he arrived he was so frightened that he could hardly speak to the big soldiers who guarded the door, but at last he gave his message and asked to see the Captain. He followed the soldier into a splendid hall richly hung with tapestries, and soon the man whose life he had saved came into the room. He was dressed so beautifully in silk and cloth of gold that Cornelius hardly recognized him, and when he did he was afraid to ask his question. But his friend told him not to fear, that the Count was favourable to him.

He led the trembling Cornelius through many rooms, and at last stopped outside a big door.

"In this hall you will see the Count, and you must ask for what you wish," he said.

But Cornelius said he was so much afraid that he dare not ask. "Besides, how shall I know the Count from all his followers?" he inquired.

And the answer was that all the people in the room would kneel bareheaded except Count Bordewyn himself. So Cornelius followed his guide into the great hall, where all the Court was assembled in grandeur, and, looking round him, he perceived that the only persons standing were himself and the man whose life he had saved. Seeing this, he at once knew that this man was the Count, and he flung himself on his knees and begged forgiveness for his presumption in speaking to him as he had done. But the Count, taking his hands, raised him to his feet and embraced him, and telling his Court the history of the previous night, he commanded them to treat Cornelius with every respect. He gave him the farm and land for his own, and stocked it with grain and cattle.

To this day there is a street in Bruges called the "Street of the Flail," which was so named in commemoration of this kind act.

CHAPTER II

THE WAR WITH SPAIN

I AM sorry to say that the example of Count Bordewyn was not followed by many of his fellow-rulers, and the prosperity of the Netherlands was sadly interfered with by continual taxation and incessant civil wars until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Crusades changed this state of affairs. Every noble gathered together what men and money he could, and started off for the East. Those left at home were able to work in peace and security, and the nation grew in prosperity. In exchange for such funds as the people could raise for their lords, they received statutes and charters granting them local liberties and trade associations. Certain taxes were imposed, it is true, but they were limited ; and the people were allowed to have their own courts of law, so that they could at any time claim justice.

At the same time the Crusades gave a great impetus to commerce, and some of the towns of Holland and Flanders grew in importance as ports and centres of trading. In those days English wool was famous for its splendid quality. Almost all of it went to the

Netherlands, where was made the best cloth then known. The people also had a splendid reputation as manufacturers of linen, and the Dukes and Counts, seeing how well their subjects got on while they were left in peace, encouraged them by giving them various liberties and favours, until all the communities were like so many little republics; and they lived very happily and prosperously, building themselves fine churches and decorating them lavishly, and encouraging the arts and learning.

In the fifteenth century a certain Duke of Burgundy, known as Philip the Good, although he was really a very wicked man, inherited certain parts of the Netherlands. His cousin Jacqueline owned several other provinces, which Philip stole from her. With what he really owned, and what he stole, he became the overlord of no less than seventeen provinces. He behaved very badly to the Dutch, as the people of Holland are called; forced them to fight in a war for which they were not prepared, and, consequently, beaten; laid waste some of their towns; and, without having any right on his side, took away from them many of their privileges.

When he died in 1467 he was succeeded by his son, Charles the Bold. This King almost ruined himself through his constant fighting, chiefly with France. When he found himself wanting money, provisions, and soldiers, he tried to provide himself with all these things by pillaging the Netherlands. This splendid little country, very busy and very prosperous, though acknowledging Charles as ruler, was divided, as we

A HYACINTH GARDEN. PAGE 25.

have heard, into many little republics, each self-governing, and each very jealous of the rights and privileges of the neighbouring towns. Instead of the whole country being banded together to resent the oppressor, the people of every town cared only for their own interests, and were rather pleased than otherwise if they saw a neighbouring town oppressed.

About this time Charles held in his power the French King, Louis XI., and he allowed him his freedom only on the condition that he should give up certain possessions he held in the Netherlands, and certain privileges he had in the government of some of the provinces, and when these conditions were fulfilled Charles became more powerful than ever.

In 1476 Charles entered into a war with the Swiss, and after several unsuccessful battles he was defeated and killed. On his death his daughter Mary became ruler of the Netherlands. She was very soon obliged to call on her subjects for help to guard their country against the old French King, and in return for their help she made them splendid promises, which she did not keep very faithfully. She married the Emperor of Germany, and died when her son Philip was four years old. He, in 1496, married Joanna, daughter of the King of Spain, and their son was the great Charles V. of Spain. It was in his reign that the seeds were laid of the great war between Spain and Holland, which is the most important and interesting page in Dutch history.

The Dutch people have always been most independent and patriotic, and their intense hatred of the

Spaniards arose chiefly from the fact that during the reign of Charles V., and even more on the accession of his son Philip II., the government of the country was taken out of their hands and given to Spanish nobles and Generals. This is not an elaborate history book, so I shall only tell you in a few words how the Spanish Governors, including in turn a daughter and a son of the great Charles V. and several of his greatest Generals, oppressed the Dutch, and interfered so cruelly with their religion and their liberty, that a body of them, led by William the Silent, Prince of Orange, fought against Spain for their rights, and endeavoured to force Philip II. to take his troops out of the country.

The patriots took the name of "The Beggars," because one of their enemies, wishing to insult them, had spoken of them as such. I cannot give you any idea of the sufferings of the Dutch people from the Spaniards. Besides forcing them to pay impossible taxes, the soldiers were allowed to behave just as they liked, and on the least sign of rebellion hundreds of Dutch, innocent and guilty, were killed. One of the first conquests gained by "The Beggars" was that of the city of Brill, which was in the hands of the Spanish. Enormous quantities of turf and peat were continually being sent into the city, for it was at the end of winter, and this peat was the only fuel. One dark night a number of Spanish soldiers were occupied in unloading the turf from several big barges. Suddenly a signal was given, and from under the outer covering of peat leapt a body of patriots who had been concealed in the barges. The garrison took alarm,

and spread the report that an immense army had arisen against them, and these few half-starved, half-frozen patriots succeeded in recapturing the town.

The whole nation was now fighting against Spain, and the Spanish army of 62,000 soldiers was doing its best to crush the brave folk who were sacrificing everything for their freedom. The Spaniards laid siege to Leyden on May 26, and the little town held out amidst the most terrible sufferings from starvation until October, when it was rescued by the action of the Dutch who were outside; they cut the dykes between Leyden and the sea, and, flooding that part of the country, forced the Spaniards to retreat.

It was in 1581 that the Dutch declared their independence, and chose William of Orange for their King. From that time Philip of Spain continually paid assassins to kill the new King, who was seriously wounded by a revolver shot in 1582, and was actually murdered by a man named Gerard two years later.

If Philip of Spain had been a brilliant ruler, he would have taken advantage of the success of his wicked plots, and endeavoured to reconquer Holland; but instead, he turned his attention to France, and removed some of his troops from the Netherlands, and before he realized what a chance he had lost, Maurice, the second son of the great William, took his father's place as ruler, called Stadtholder, and General of the army of patriots, and reigned successfully.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM OF ORANGE

DURING the last years of this terrible war Holland had been extending her empire over the seas. She had a greater trade with the East Indies than any other country in the world, and she had taught Europe many useful lessons in agriculture. The country had also been seized with a mania for tulip-growing, but tulips are such a delightful subject that I shall tell you much more about them later on. Thousands of acres of land had been reclaimed from the sea, and this also is a subject which deserves much more attention than I can give it here, because for the moment I want to complete the skeleton of Dutch history, and show you very simply through what vicissitudes the brave little country passed before it became the independent kingdom it is nowadays. The Netherlands had by this time been broken up into the two kingdoms of Holland and Belgium, for certain of the States had chosen to remain under Spanish rule, and they became the country of Belgium, but Holland is still called the Netherlands to this day.

In 1641, William, the son of the Stadtholder of

Holland at that time, married the daughter of our Charles I. of England. Many years later his son married his first cousin Mary, daughter of James II., and he and his wife became King and Queen of England, reigning together as William and Mary.

Many Jacobite refugees fled to Holland, and war broke out between the Dutch and English fleets. The Dutch Admirals were De Ruyter and the famous Van Tromp, and the English fleet was commanded by Monk and Blake. I dare say you have heard the story about the two rival Admirals—how Tromp set up a broom as his emblem, tying it to his mast for all the world to see, thereby showing that he meant to sweep the ocean clear of all but the Dutch; and how Admiral Blake answered this challenge by fixing up a whip to signify that he would thrash the presumptuous Dutchman who threatened the British fleet.

The war continued for two years, and at times it seemed almost as if the Dutch would make good their boast. However, the English beat them in the end, and by that time they were very anxious for peace, as they needed their ships to protect their East Indian commerce, which was even greater than that of the English. Soon after this Cromwell died, and Charles II. came back through Holland to England, and declared friendship with the Dutch; but it was not very long before the two countries were again at war.

In this war the Dutch made a splendid fight for victory, and at last peace was arranged. A little later a revolution in Holland resulted in the murder of

De Witt, who was then governing the country, and the establishment of William III. as Stadtholder. Holland was attacked by France, but the people were able to defend themselves once again by cutting their dykes and letting the sea flood their country. It was after this war that William, wishing to destroy the friendship between England and France, and to form an alliance with England himself, visited that country with the intention of arranging a marriage between himself and the niece of Charles II.

When Charles died, his brother, James II., became King. He was a Roman Catholic, and the English people did not like his religion, so after a few years they invited the Protestant, William of Orange, his son-in-law, to become their Sovereign. Thus, for a time, Holland and England were united under one rule. William died, but England continued to be an ally of Holland, and the great Marlborough led the united armies of the two countries against France and Spain. During this period and for years afterwards Holland was a republic; in 1748 it became again a kingdom under William V., and so it has continued ever since. Holland is now a neutral country: this means that she does not take part in any European war, and all the big European Powers guarantee her safety.

The present Dutch Sovereign is Queen Wilhelmina. Her father died when she was quite a tiny baby, and for seventeen years her mother ruled the country for her. She was brought up very simply, and used to play with the children of the various officials as if

she were one of them. The Dutch people worship her, and feel the same intimate affection for her as was felt in England for our beloved Queen Victoria. She was crowned Queen when she was only eighteen, and soon after she married a German Prince.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIGHT WITH THE SEA

THERE are some learned people who tell us that a great many years ago this island of ours was one with the mass of land which we call Europe, and that the sea gradually made its way through a stretch of low-lying land, till at last Great Britain was completely severed from the Continent. We all know that the Eastern counties of England which face the little country of Holland are just as flat and marshy as the opposite shores. The farmers and labourers in these counties are continually endeavouring to make good pasture-land of the unhealthy marshes and fens, as they are called, and each year sees acres of land reclaimed and turned to good use; but also each year a little land is stolen from these counties by the greedy sea. The patient Dutch people on the other shore are carrying on the same kind of work, but they make wonderful dykes and drive the sea always a little further and further back; and though much of their country is actually beneath the level of the sea, they jealously guard the treasure they have captured with so much perseverance and energy, that the tyrant sea is kept in subjection. Of course, as the land lies lower than the

A MILKMAID OF MARKEN. PAGE 22.

water the natural result would be that the water would flood the land unless it were kept out by an embankment; and this wonderful little nation, so brave and daring as to defy the sea, have surrounded their land with dykes, which are huge banks of unyielding strength towering above the lowlands of the country, and preventing the sea from obtaining entrance. Of course, these dykes could only be made gradually as the sea was turned from one spot to another by dams and locks, and these facts will give you a far better proof than any other I could find of the wonderful character and the great courage and perseverance of a nation which has reclaimed its fatherland from the sea.

You will not be surprised to be told that such a land is very damp and misty. All the surface is cut up by innumerable canals. If you could see the whole country from a height, it would look like an enormous puzzle. It consists of hundreds of green patches cut up by the waterways, and decorated with red-roofed villages and towns. Through all of these canals flows the same water; all of them are connected with each other. Here and there the canals are wide, and bear much traffic on their placid surfaces. Through miles of green fields wander little baby canals, draining the pasture-lands, and bravely carrying barges, which drift slowly in single file from one busy centre to another.

There are plenty of railways, but the trains are generally slow, and in many places the land perceptibly gives way as the heavy train presses it, so most of the conveyance is done on the canals.

It is still part of the everyday life of Holland to

reclaim the stretches of mud and marsh from the sea. When this has to be done, the land is first enclosed with a dyke to prevent any water flowing into it. On the edge of this dyke windmills are erected, each of which works a pump. As the mills draw up the water it is discharged into a canal, which takes it to the sea. Only fifty years ago an immense piece of submerged land called the Haarlem Lake was drained and rendered fit for cultivation, and one of the favourite projects of certain Dutch Ministers is the draining of the Zuyder Zee, an enormous stretch of water of which you have certainly heard, and which once must have been dry land.

When I travelled in Holland one of the greatest discomforts which I experienced was the want of good drinking water. Even if I was content to quench my thirst ordinarily with wine or beer, I found that my tea and coffee were utterly spoilt by the strong taste of the bad water. The Dutch people are used to it, and drink a good deal of coffee and tea; but both are taken so strong and so bitter that, even if made with the purest water, they would be undrinkable for you and me. Once, when I was staying in a tiny village called Volendam, I had taken a little crying child home to his mother, whom I knew. She wanted to wash his face, which I could hardly see through dirt and tears, and from where do you think she drew her water? She lifted a loose board in the floor of her room, and there, immediately underneath, was a canal which passed under her house. The house was built on piles over the water, and the whole family

used this dirty water for everything—to wash in and to cook with and to drink. Besides much dirt, there were two or three tiny fish in the jugful that she took up when I was there, and when I asked her if she filtered the water at all for drinking, she shook her head, not understanding the reason for anything of the kind. So I told her how much better it would be for her and her family if she boiled the water before drinking it; but she replied that she thought this would take away all the taste. Just imagine wanting your water to taste of dirt and fishes! But I shall tell you a great deal more about these funny people of Volendam, for I lived among them for some time, and knew them quite well.

CHAPTER V

HOW THE PEOPLE DRESS

Volendam is a tiny village on the Zuyder Zee. All the men in the place are fishermen. Nowadays they are rather poor, but at one time they caught a great many anchovies, which they sold for a very good price. They spent most of the money they earned in this way in buying jewellery for themselves, their wives, and their children, and as they wanted as much show as possible for their money, they bought great big silver buttons.

First, I should tell you that they do not dress as we do. The men wear tight coats of blue or red, with striped waistcoats underneath, and very baggy trousers, which are made of red cloth, blue cloth, and dark velvet. They wear rough stockings and big wooden shoes, which are called sabots. On Sundays, if the weather is not suitable for fishing, they waddle like ducks up and down the one little narrow road of Volendam, with their hands in their big pockets and a cigar in their mouths, or else they squat on their heels in rows along the side of the road, and perhaps, instead of smoking a cigar, they put a lump of tobacco in their

mouths and chew it as you might chew toffee or sweet gum. It sounds rather horrible, doesn't it ? The little boys, even the tiniest ones, are dressed just like their fathers and big brothers, and when they come out of school they like to behave in just the same way, and they strut about very proudly with their hands in their pockets, and, if they can get hold of it, they have the end of a cigar in their little mouths.

The jewellery of the men consists entirely of buttons. At the waist of their wide trousers they have two silver buttons just as big as they can afford to have. Sometimes they are like saucers, and stretch right across the body. On the little boys they are not so large, but about the size of half-crowns, with a ship or a Dutch boy beaten or engraved on them. Their striped waistcoats fasten at the neck with two real gold buttons ; they have ear-rings in their ears, and often rings on their fingers. Besides this, the buttons on their coats are of silver and gold.

The women's and girls' favourite jewellery is for their necks. They all wear necklaces made of five and six rows of corals with the most beautiful clasps. Of course, some of the poor people have imitation necklaces, but this is very seldom, for the girls will go without food and warmth so that their jewellery may be of the best. The women show each other how rich they are in the same way as in England, namely, by their dress ; but while English women make themselves as slim and elegant as they can, the Dutch peasant woman, when really well dressed, must look very fat, for the more woollen petticoats she wears the more she

is admired by her neighbours. So on Sunday morning, when all the world goes to church, the women roll along looking as big as houses, and with each step they try to swing their clothes, which only come to the ankle, so that their friends may count how many petticoats they have on. And what do you think the poor folk do who have only their dress skirt to wear? They pad themselves all round with cotton-wool, so that they may look fat, and I fancy they must walk very quietly and modestly, so that their poor single skirts may not betray their poverty. All the women and girls wear tight lace caps very stiffly starched, so that the pieces which turn back from their faces stand out like white wings. The baby boys and girls, dressed in the same way as their mothers and fathers, are the dearest little things. They are like little dolls. I used to pet them so much that they followed me wherever I went, and I bought sweets and fed them as if they were little pigeons. All over Holland in the villages it is the same: the babies dress like their parents.

Each district has its own peculiar costume. So one might imagine one was living on the stage in a play, where every one is dressed up. In another village, called Axel, part of the costume is made of bright handkerchiefs which are pinned on to a frame on the shoulders. This frame is as high as the head, and the little girls look like butterflies as they run about in the sunny green fields. In another place—an island called Marken—all the women have a long ringlet of hair on each side of their faces, and a fringe cut straight across their foreheads. Of course, they wear

a cap, so this is all the hair they show; but the old ladies, who haven't any hair left, wear corkscrew curls made of false hair and even of cotton. In this island the boys are dressed like girls until they are six years old, and the only way to tell them apart is that the boys have a little button on their caps. After six years old the boys wear trousers, but the top of their dress is still a girl's, and they look very quaint and amusing, I can assure you. This island is in the Zuyder Zee.

In Holland in the winter you can skate to your heart's content. All the canals are frozen, and instead of walking or driving everybody uses skates, even the men and women carrying big baskets on their heads as they go to market to buy and sell. The little children learn to skate as you learn to walk, and they have such a splendid balance that they just tie their skates to their stockinged feet with a bit of string and glide along as if they had never done anything else. The wooden sabots they wear to walk in are not easy things to manage. My little boy tries them sometimes, and he can hardly get across the nursery; but the little Dutch babies toddle along in them, and even run quite fast. In any case, they do not get wet feet if they go on the grass. They eat potatoes and black bread, and black bread and potatoes; sometimes they have a little bacon-fat to dip their potatoes in, sometimes they have a little cheese and fish, but they eat meat very rarely.

In the country districts all over Holland the houses are built alike. In a few villages they are thatched, but with these exceptions they are gaily painted little

buildings with bright-red tiled roofs. The walls are often of planks of wood painted green, and the little window-frames are the freshest white. The people spend much more time and thought on the cleanliness of their houses than on their own persons, and nowhere in the world will you see brighter, cleaner little villages than in Holland. The whole of the outside of the house is washed every week, and the owners do not forget the bricks or cobbles which pave the road in front of them. Their windows shine like diamonds, and indoors their bits of brass and copper are rubbed till they might serve as mirrors. Instead of having bedsteads as we do, they sleep in a kind of cupboard in the wall. The bed is made two or three feet from the ground, and when they are inside they draw the little curtains and settle themselves snugly in their box. I wonder they ever wake up; it must be so very stuffy, and often two or three babies sleep with their mother and father when there is only one bed. However, some of the houses are little farms, and the elder children sleep in the hay and straw in the stables with the horses and cows.

A DUTCH BOY. PAGE 21.

CHAPTER VI

TULIPS

THE Dutch people, dressed up like quaint dolls with their gay little houses, their little canals, and their bright green fields cut up like a chess-board, live in a country that is for all the world like the most delightful toy; everything is so neat, so well arranged, and so regular. It is not surprising that their favourite flowers are the gorgeous, tidy, conventional tulips. At Haarlem, an old town near Amsterdam, live the greatest tulip-growers in the world. You know, of course, that the tulip springs from a bulb. Some of the bulbs you will know best are the hyacinth, the narcissus, the daffodil; all these flowers are grown very largely at Haarlem, and the bulbs are sent from here all over the world. In April, when they blossom, the whole country as far as one can see is spread with a brilliant carpet of these many-coloured flowers, and the scent of the hyacinths is carried in the air for miles. In this district you may have as many flowers as you like for the trouble of picking them. If you drive along the roads, poor children will throw bunches into the carriage till you are buried with the sweet things.

No one cares for the flowers, they are thrown away; the precious object that receives all the attention is the bulb.

In the seventeenth century all Holland went quite mad over these tulips. Politics, religion, war—everything was forgotten in this mad craze. Bulbs which never existed at all outside the imagination were sold for enormous sums on the Exchange, and sold again and again at a profit backwards and forwards. The bargains were concluded on paper, and neither buyer nor seller ever saw the object of so much excitement. Thousands of florins would be given for a bulb which was only supposed to exist. Of course, enormous quantities of bulbs were really sold and cultivated, and the rarer kinds fetched more than their weight in gold. A bulb named Viceroy was sold at Alkmaar in 1637 for 4,200 florins, and I could give you a whole list of equally extravagant prices; but I think we will leave the subject of the tulips after I have told a little story about a man who wanted to have a garden of them.

A certain Governor of Egypt, Said Pacha, had a most passionate love for flowers. At last, to give himself a great treat, he ordered from Holland a complete collection of tulips, for which he agreed to pay 20,000 francs. The big case of bulbs arrived, but, instead of reaching the Pacha himself, it was opened by one of his officials, who knew nothing of the order which had been given. Seeing, as he thought, a box of onions, he sent them to the kitchen, where the cook stored them, thinking that

they were something very special, as they differed a good deal from the onions to which he was accustomed. A few days after this the Pacha gave an important diplomatic banquet, and the cook, by way of a treat, grilled the poor bulbs, and sent them to the table piled up on great dishes. You can imagine the faces the guests made as they set their teeth in the horrible-tasting roots; but it is hard to picture the Pacha's face when he found what had been the fate of his 20,000 francs' collection of tulip bulbs. The adventure almost killed his love for gardening, but the Dutch growers, when they heard of the story, named a tulip in remembrance of it. It was not a very kind thing to do, for it is called the "Stormy Tulip" in memory of his anger.

The little Dutch children spend much of their play-time on and about the canals, hiding in the barges, and chasing each other from one vessel to another. Not very safe games, you will think, and games that I am sure your nurses and governesses would forbid you to play; but the Dutch people have been accustomed to water so long that they seem to have no fear of it. Serious accidents rarely happen, though it is very often that Jan or Betje fall into the canal and are dragged out and sent home to get dry clothes and a good scolding before they come out again to play exactly the same games. Once, long ago, a little boy was creeping in and out of the barges and the under-ground cellars, in search of adventure, when suddenly he saw before him a big boat with many men in it where he had never seen a boat anchored before. In

his excitement he called out to the passers-by to come and see what he had seen, and it was discovered only just in time that the boat was filled with gunpowder, and was underneath the Exchange, which the workers were going to blow up. In reward for his warning. ever since this event in 1622 the children of Amsterdam have been allowed to play in the big grounds of the Bourse for a week each year. Another holiday of Dutch children is the holiday of the Linlak. As a matter of fact, it is not their feast at all, for linlak means "lie-a-bed," and I think you will agree with me that they don't get much fun out of it. For some days before the feast the boys collect the dead and drowned bodies of cats and dogs and bury them. Very early in the morning of Linlak Day they dig up these horrible remains, and, tying them to the end of a string, they run about all through the streets singing a song to the sluggards who do not rise early. Everybody tries to get up very early, for if the boys pass a house where the shutters are not down and the people working, they leave one of these carcasses on the threshold to show that they have passed. The police try hard to prevent the boys from indulging in this game, but it is no use, so everybody gets up before the usual time, and the boys after their procession have a special breakfast of hot spiced buns and large cups of chocolate.

One more story and we will start a new chapter about St. Nicholas, in memory of whom is held the greatest festival of the year for Dutch children, corresponding with our festival of Christmas. One fine

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spring day, many years ago, a little boy was wandering along a road which ran beside a very important dyke. The grassy banks of the dyke were sown with wild-flowers, and the boy, whom we will call Jan, tried to gather a bunch to take home to his invalid mother. By and by he came to a spot where a tiny thread of water slowly trickled through the grass. He passed by, thinking of his flowers. After he had walked a few yards, it struck him that all was not quite right. There was nowhere for the water to come from unless it had made its way through the dyke, and if this had happened, if there was the slightest crevice in the bank of earth which was the sole barrier between an enormous force of water and his beloved village, what would be the result? Pale with apprehension, he rushed back. Already the little stream seemed bigger. In a night the fissure might widen out until the mighty water would break through the dyke and flood the country, destroying thousands of homes and innumerable precious lives. Jan called and shouted for help. No one was in sight. The evening was drawing in. It was far to the nearest house, and no one might pass for hours. He found the hole. It was now big enough to admit his little hand. There was only one thing to be done—the space must be tightly filled up till help could be got. But there was no object on which he could lay hands to stop up the dangerous hole; round him was the soft grass, and behind and before stretched the smooth road. Suddenly Jan had an inspiration. He thrust in his arm as far as it would go, and resolved to stay until

a passer-by, fetching help, should relieve him. Slowly the daylight vanished—utter silence reigned all round. The night fell cold and dark, but still Jan held his place. The pain in his arm grew and grew till all his body was one ache, and the poor child gave up any hope of seeing a living soul before daybreak. At last, when he was fainting with pain and exhaustion, he heard voices and saw lights. His mother had sent out a search-party for her little boy. Too weak to raise his voice, he trembled with fear lest they should pass him by. But one of the men found him, and with a great shout told his companions that the end of their search was reached. When they heard what the boy had done, men were sent for to mend the dyke, and you may imagine that no words were too strong, and no praise too great, to lavish on this little Jan, who had saved his country by his cleverness and courage.

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CHAPTER VII

ST. NICHOLAS

THE great feast-day for the children, equivalent to our Christmas in many points, is St. Nicholas. Indeed, we borrow the saint under the guise of Santa Claus, and our little ones look for him and the treasures he brings them. This feast occurs on December 5. In the big towns the shops are brilliantly decorated for days beforehand, and it is one of the children's treats to go out with their parents on the eve of St. Nicholas to see the shops, many of which distribute small presents from the bag held by a gorgeously clothed image of the saint standing in the doorway.

At home the children meet with the saint once more. The room is cleared, and in he walks, carrying a big sackful of sweetmeats, oranges, apples, etc., which he scatters on the floor. Indeed, the eve of St. Nicholas is called Strooiavond, which means "strewing evening." With all this joy and excitement to usher in the feast, what can be said of the day itself? The excited children go early to bed to bring the morning more quickly. Before they retire they place their largest shoes, or sabots, in the chimney-place,

so that St. Nicholas, coming in the night with his black slave, may fill them with good things. The children are not lie-abeds on this eventful day. Up before daylight, their first visit is to the chimney-place, where they find that the saint has stuffed their foot-gear with fruit and sweets. The more important presents are hidden away all over the house, and the joy of discovering them is immense.

Naturally, give-and-take occurs. Petrus hands over the beautiful doll he found in a saucepan to Betje, who is quite content to give him in exchange the box of leaden soldiers which were so cunningly hidden in mother's large work-basket.

At the feast of St. Nicholas, besides the presents and good wishes which are exchanged, certain special cakes are offered at the shrine. Two of these are very seductive—one a delicately flavoured gingerbread, made up in the most fantastic shapes; the other a deliciously light pastry, fashioned tunnel-wise, the hollow filled in with a kind of soft almond icing. But the most delightful one is the enormous gingerbread doll which each person, young or old, receives—a male figure for the women-folk, and a lady in ruffles and farthingale for the men. It is very interesting to note that most of the dolls are modelled in medieval clothes, the wooden moulds in which they are shaped frequently dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

One winter, at this time of the year, I was staying with my husband at the little fishing village of Volendam, and we wished that the little Volendamers,

A LITTLE GIRL AND HER TOY RABBIT. PAGE 81.

who are all very poor, should for once have a splendid St. Nicholas. A French artist, who was there at the same time, was of our opinion, and we were equally supported by our host Spaander and his wife and their family of blooming daughters. In the wooden hotel there is a "coffee-room," long and low, of really vast proportions. In the summer-time half of it forms the drawing-room. At the farther end of this apartment is a small stage, with wings. On this occasion (thanks to Spaander) the whole of it was covered in spotless white, tables were erected, and upon their surface were arranged about a thousand toys and as many oranges and cakes. A white throne was placed for St. Nicholas, whose part was taken by the Frenchman. He wore a long white woollen robe falling over a purple silk underdress, a cape of costly old yellow brocade, and a gorgeous jewelled mitre, and he was made venerable by long white hair and beard. The dress of the black slave, whose part was taken by my husband, was equally correct and effective—a long, tight-fitting garment of green velvet, showing a white robe underneath; an orange silk turban was wound round the black locks of a disguising wig and lit up his cork-black face. So much for the preparations, completed with considerable trouble and a great deal of amusement.

My husband painted a large poster, on which was set forth a notice to all the children of Volendam that at 6.30 a boat would land upon the quay, bearing St. Nicholas and his faithful slave laden with gifts. One may easily imagine the joy and delight of these

poor fisher-children, into whose uneventful lives what English children call a treat hardly ever enters. They crowded about the announcement, and read that St. Nicholas would come laden with gifts. Who can say what wild, beautiful hopes filled their hearts? Before five o'clock the youngsters began to assemble. The quay was crowded with them, so was the narrow road leading from the quay to the hotel. The parents also were there, quite as excited and almost as credulous as their children. Indeed, all Volendam turned out to welcome the saint. Rain began to fall; but, although it soaked their poor clothes, it seemed to have no damping effect upon their spirits, all afire as they were with expectation. Meanwhile, the saint and his slave rowed out to their boat. It was now almost dark, but in the faint light one could still distinguish the fishing-boats which always crowd the harbour, their tall masts and sails dimly defined against the grey sky, and their narrow flags gently flapping in the rain. At one point there was an opening between the boats, a glimmering waterway, where those who were in the secret expected the boat to appear. The time passed slowly. It was seven o'clock; the saint was half an hour late, and every one was very wet. Still, all Volendam was full of cheerful good-humour.

At length a blaze of bright light far out on the water revealed the saint—a venerable figure standing in the boat, crosier in hand, evidently blessing the expectant crowd. In a few moments the boat reached the landing-place. With blare of trumpets, and by the light of the torches, a procession was formed.

How radiant were the faces illumined by the flickering glow! Soon the warm, well-lighted café was reached. The saint sat on his throne, and his good slave rapidly distributed presents to the little ones, safely housed from the inclement weather! Alas! they were very wet; but, as not one of the 700 coughed during the distribution, it may be concluded that the young Volendamers do not easily take cold. Their surroundings are so damp that they are almost amphibious.

Every face beamed with happiness. The genial St. Nicholas and his hard-worked slave; the Spaander family, all helping vigorously; the three fine, tall Volendamers, who, in their yellow scarves of office, kept order so gently and gaily; down to the very youngest child—all the faces were sweet and patient, and aglow with the pleasure either of giving or receiving.

The crowd of children looked plump and healthy, and although many garments were much patched, there were no rags; the poorest seemed to be well cared for and comfortable.

Seven hundred of them were made happy with toys and fruit; but there was no scrambling or pushing, nothing but happy expectation, and then still more happy satisfaction. All too soon it was over: the last child clattered down the long room with its precious armful.

Afterwards we heard from the school-teachers and the children's parents that most of them believed firmly that it was the real saint descended from heaven who had laid his hands on their heads in benediction as they received their presents from the black slave.

CHAPTER VIII

DUTCH MANNERS

In all parts of Holland where the people still wear their charming costumes and their wonderful lace caps the women make the funniest sights of themselves, when they want to be very smart, by wearing over their lace caps a bonnet trimmed with little feathers and flowers, such as you may see in any small shop in England any day of your life. Most of the caps are full in front, that is to say, they spread out in wings, so the bonnet has to be tilted on to the very back of the head. You must remember that no hair shows at all, and you cannot think how funny and ugly the whole concern is, especially as the richer the women are, and the more elaborate their lace and head jewellery, the more tilted is their ugly little modern bonnet, and the more ridiculous they look.

Outside all the houses you will often notice several pairs of sabots, and outside the village churches and the public-houses you may see hundreds of pairs. This is because every one on entering a building takes off his wooden shoes and walks in in his stocking-feet. I cannot think how they all get into their own

sabots when hundreds of them come rushing out of church at once, can you ?

Another Dutch custom, and a very pretty one, is the welcome every one gives to storks. In many of the gardens and fields you may see a tall pole supporting a little platform on which the storks may make their nest. It is very lucky to have a stork on one's land, and no one ever injures them or teases them. Indeed, if there were people unkind enough to wish to do so, the police would soon be after them. The Dutch say that the storks bring babies, so if you see a stork on the roof of a house it is possible that the people inside have just had a little new baby given to them.

Once upon a time a stranger to Holland went into a barber's shop in a little Dutch village and asked for a shave. The master came forward himself to shave him, and the stranger sat down. He took out of his pocket a gulden, which is a piece of money worth 1s. 8d., and a knife. "Look here," he said, "I have a very tender skin. If you shave me well you shall take the gulden, but if you draw blood from my cheek I shall run this knife through your body." The master, thinking the man was mad, and would certainly do as he threatened, trembled so violently that he thought to himself, "This will never do; I shall certainly slip and cut his cheek, and then what will happen?" So, asking the customer to excuse him for a moment, he went to the room behind the shop and sent an assistant to take his place. The stranger gave the same command to the assistant with the same effect, and just at that moment the barber's son came in from

school, and, seeing the assistant so pale and trembling, he asked what was the matter. The stranger explained, and the boy offered very cheerfully to shave him. He lathered him very coolly, whistling all the time, and then shaved him without showing any great anxiety to avoid accidents. At last the job was finished; the stranger arose without a scratch. "You are a brave boy," he said. "Here is the gulden for you; and now tell me why you are so much braver than any barber I have met?" The boy slipped the coin into his pocket, where it rattled amongst a dozen articles—a top, a knife, a whistle, some sweets, a button, marbles, and the rest. "Well, you see," said he, with his head on one side, "if I had cut your skin I was also ready to cut your throat before you could touch me." The stranger was so terrified that he ran out of the shop as hard as he could!

The churches are very cold in Holland, and so are the stone floors of the big farmhouses. To comfort themselves and keep their feet warm, the Dutch people have in constant use little wooden stools made like a box, with a perforated lid, but one side is missing, and into the opening where it should be they slip a little earthenware pot full of red-hot peat, and every one who suffers from cold rests his or her feet on one of these warm little stoofs, as they are called. In the winter every woman carries one to church, and when her feet are warmed she puts it on her knees and warms her hands. They are sometimes quite gorgeous articles of furniture, and are made of carved oak, and have their owners' names picked out in bright brass-headed nails.

They are also put under baby's chair to keep him warm, and the little earthenware pots of peat serve often to keep the tea or coffee boiling.

Every village and most of the towns in Holland hold an annual feast called the Kermis. It takes the shape of a village fair such as you have seen, I dare say, in the country in England. However small the village may be, it is always thickly crowded at Kermis-time. All the people are visited by relations, and the peasantry from the surrounding country gather together to get what gaiety they may. There are plenty of stalls where you may buy everything imaginable; you may patronize roundabouts and swings, penny shows and free entertainments, and, most important of all, eat poffertjes and wavelen. The poffertjes are little round greasy cakes covered with butter and sugar. They are cooked before the client's eyes, and one must eat them quite fresh and hot. They are made by the hundred in dented trays placed over a fire. Little dabs of paste are put in each hollow, and as fast as the cook fills the hollows at one end of the tray the poffertjes at the other end are cooked and ready to be served. A woman stands near the cook and covers the hot cakes with butter and sugar, and over twenty are included in one portion. The wavelen are simply oblong wafers, also buttered; one is not expected to eat more than two or three of these. I wonder if you could get through a first helping of twenty poffertjes? It is a nice fat name, don't you think so?

For breakfast in Holland the people have bread and

cheese—that is to say, people who keep to old-fashioned Dutch habits, and who are not so poor as to be obliged to live on dry bread. In certain parts of the country, where stores are not always to be procured, sugar is looked upon as a great luxury, and once when I drank coffee with some peasants, I saw that four people used the same piece of sugar to sweeten their drink. It was not the ordinary lump-sugar which we use, but the very hard candy-sugar which many of us know, which has a piece of string through the middle. I had a piece to myself, as I was a stranger and a visitor; but it amused me to see the people gravely suspending the sugar in their hot coffee until they thought that their share was melted off. I was visiting this same farm-house one Saturday evening. The women had been hard at work scrubbing and cleaning the whole place. I walked in in my English fashion, and, I am afraid, left some footmarks on the spotless floor. Though there was no fear of a Dutch visitor showing the same bad manners, my hostess, in silent reproof, made a little path of paper from the fireplace to the door, in readiness, I suppose, for my outgoing.

I was told by some Dutch friends of a visit that a very important man paid to a lady whose servant prided herself on keeping her mistress's house spotless. The day was muddy, and the important visitor was slight of stature. When the sturdy serving-maid opened the door to him, she lifted him up in her arms, carried him to a chair, set him down, took off his boots, and replaced them by a pair of slippers. Only after these preparations did she allow him to walk into the

A VIEW IN THE HAGUE. PAGE 48.

presence of her mistress. I think some Englishmen would be so paralyzed by such treatment that they would be dumb for weeks ; but, unless you have lived in Holland, it is impossible to believe to what extent many Dutch women carry their passion for cleanliness. It becomes their sole care and interest in life.

CHAPTER IX

THE SAILOR AND THE HORSE

The little country of Holland is cut up into eleven provinces, and though you will often read and hear that Holland is a very monotonous country, always offering exactly the same aspect to the view, these statements are by no means to be entirely believed. Certainly, it is true to say that there are no ups and downs in a Dutch landscape, and that the country is quite flat, with the exception of one of the southern provinces; but people who know their Holland thoroughly, who have visited and explored every part of this little country, know that almost every province differs completely in character from the others. Thus, in North Holland, which is the province best known to visitors, the bright green fields, the red roofs of the farm-houses, the brilliant cleanliness of Nature herself, are so striking that they colour all descriptions of Holland to the exclusion of equally salient characteristics. But if you go south to Guelderland, you will find much of the land is Scottish-looking moorland, and the cottages and farms are thatched with straw long since hidden by a covering of the most velvety

moss ; and in the bleak grey province of Drenthe there is to be seen the wonderful hunnebedden—great masses of granite quarried and brought here by the Romans, by what magical means no one may say.

In the North of Holland lies the province of Friesland, which is said to be the most fertile, the most wealthy, and to own as its daughters the most beautiful women in Holland.

It is said that at one time the Friesians were so rich that many of them, to get rid of their superfluous money, had their door-handles, knockers, etc., beaten out of solid gold, and that they lit their pipes with spills made of bank-notes. Certainly, the jewellery worn by the Friesian women is the most costly you will find in the country, being studded richly with diamonds, and the covering which the women wear under their lace caps is of pure gold.

Leeuwarden is the chief town of Friesland, and was once upon a time a city by the sea ; but since it was built the people have fought against the waters with such success that they have gained a band of fertile pasture-land some ten or eleven miles in breadth, and to this extent Leeuwarden is now an inland town. I will tell you a story about a very amusing affair that happened in this town.

One Friday, as we were strolling through the busy streets, admiring and criticizing the costumes and caps which market-day brings into the town, we were attracted by the sale of horses. The lot "put up" was a scraggy steed that had evidently seen much better days. However, these were so far past that no

one in the crowd seemed inclined to make a bid, though jokes in plenty were passed at the expense of the poor beast and its owner, who preferred to remain unknown to the general public. The auctioneer himself did not disdain to be witty as he endeavoured to persuade some one to start the bidding. Of points the horse had many, its skeleton being but barely covered with a mangy brown skin; and as it stood there with all four legs bent inwards, and its head apparently drooping in shame at such painful publicity, it seemed a cruel mockery to let the sale go on. At length a bid was made—thirty guldens, which equals fifty shillings, and this noble offer set the ball rolling. It was raised by guldens until the sum had reached the generous amount of fifty. The auctioneer, with the patter of his trade, was just about to knock it down to the bidder, when a sailor in the crowd, blushing at the sound of his own voice, raised the bid to sixty guldens (five pounds). This was not disputed, and the crowd found a fresh source of amusement in the evident surprise with which Jack heard that the horse was his. He had but recently landed, and his pockets were full of money, so he handed over the sixty guldens to the auctioneer's assistant, and suffered the bridle to be placed between his unresisting fingers.

Suddenly the humour of the situation seemed to burst upon him. He was rejoiced to find himself the centre of so much notice, and told us with loud guffaws that he had just come from Harlingen on a visit to his mother. He had made a bid for the horse in order to experience the pleasure of a new sensation,

and because, as is the way with sailors all the world over, his money burnt a hole in his pocket. However, the old mother was waiting at home, and thither he directed his steps, leading his sorry steed, and followed by the laughing crowd, anxious to assist at "developments." Arrived in a poor street, the sailor stopped at the entrance to a large, high house, evidently let out in rooms to innumerable tenants, who clustered round the door, babies in arms, to discover the cause of all the commotion. What would happen now? A murmur passed through the crowd that the boy's mother lived on the fifth floor. Nothing daunted, Jack seized the bridle firmly, and the wretched beast allowed itself to be led up the flights of stairs to the old lady's dwelling-place. The crowd bustled up the stairs after this strange pair. The old lady, a worthy woman wearing the beautiful gold cap and ornaments of North Holland, awaited the arrival of her only son in the little room, which, with a cupboard-like kitchen, composed her home—small indeed, but of exquisite cleanliness. Her feelings on hearing the strange noises on the staircase, evidently stopping at her door, can better be imagined than described.

The door was flung open, and in walked Jack, dragging after him the terrified animal. The crowd, or such of it as could find standing-room on the small landing, remained outside, for there was little or no available space in the widow's apartment. Her joy at the sight of her son was entirely lost in her fright and horror at the intrusion of the woebegone horse, and, after she had recovered herself a little, her lamenta-

tions and reproaches were loud. Little enough money would be left after such a purchase to keep her until her son's return from his next voyage, and his holiday even would have to be shortened because of this ridiculous purchase. The crestfallen boy had nothing to say for himself. He stood stupidly holding on to the bridle of the trembling horse, while the mother emptied his pockets of the remainder of his money, of which there was a good deal, in spite of what he had so foolishly spent. The sight of it proved to her that he had not been extravagant in other ways. She calmed down, and turned her attention to the matter in hand. The first thing to be done was to get the horse downstairs, and the next to try to sell him for as much as possible. More easily said than done. The animal, summoning all his remaining strength and spirit, obstinately refused to go down the precipitous flights of stairs up which he had come so much against his will. His determination threatened to prove disastrous to the contents of the room, and the crowd, realizing that discretion is the better part of valour, left the landing and the staircase free for the hoofs of the maddened steed. In the end the poor beast had to be killed up the five flights of stairs. Though one was sorry for the horse, the incident was not without its amusing side, and my husband afterwards sought out the sailor, and made him a present of the money he had lost over the transaction. The man was so grateful that he gave me a small monkey, which he had trained in the most marvellous manner. When I left Holland I presented it to the Zoo at Amsterdam. In

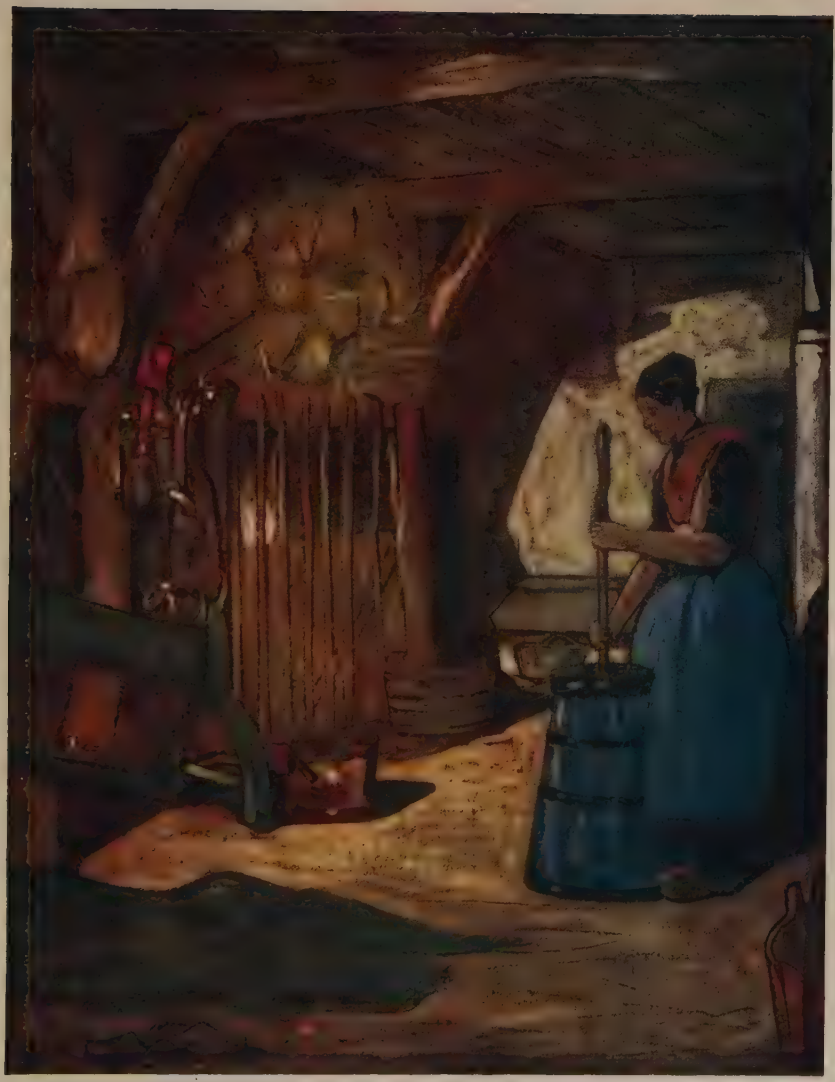
addition to this, he spent many hours in the construction of a full-rigged sailing-boat, enclosed mysteriously in a narrow-necked bottle—a souvenir which reached a safe haven in our home in England.

CHAPTER X

DUTCH TOWNS

The Hague is the capital of Holland, as the seat of government and the residence of the Queen; but the most important town is Amsterdam, in which the Queen has also a palace. This she visits at least once a year, when she comes to receive a certain part of her income from the town. When she came to Amsterdam on the occasion of her coronation, one of the principal statesmen wrote a very formal and majestic speech for her to read to her subjects; but the little Queen, who was then only eighteen years old, after reading it through, tore it up. "This won't do at all," said she. "My people and I, in order to understand each other well, must speak in a language that will express what I wish it to express;" and she wrote out for herself a very simple and sincere little speech, which she made to her subjects, thus saying to them what *she* wished, and not what her counsellors thought advisable. Little instances like this, which Queen Wilhelmina frequently gives, of her intention to rule the country herself endear her to her people, who adore her.

There is a certain bad neighbourhood in Amsterdam



A FARMER'S WIFE CHURNING. PAGE 64.

which is chiefly inhabited by very rough fishermen and labourers. It is worse than the terrible slums of Whitechapel, and it is not very safe to venture in these streets alone, yet each year the brave little Queen drives through this district quite unguarded, and gives the rough folk her kindest words and sweetest smiles, and, in consequence, they are her warmest and most enthusiastic supporters.

More than twenty years ago on a certain day each year these roughs, who were certainly much more violent then than now, used to have a great feast, and one of the chief features of the day was known as "paling trekken," or eel-pulling. A rope was stretched across the canal, and in the middle was tied a live eel. The game was for several men to row swiftly beneath the rope, and, in passing under it, to try to pull the slippery eel from it. On the grounds of the cruelty of this sport, the people were warned that on the next occasion the police would interfere. They were not the sort to be frightened into submission, and at their next feast the old game went on as usual, while they made preparations to enable them to defy the police if it should be necessary. When the sport was at its height a body of police marched up and cut the rope on which hung the wriggling eel. This was the signal for the fight to begin. The police were obliged to send for reinforcements, but even then they got the worst of it. They were battered and bruised, and thrown into the canal. Many women and children, pushed by the swaying, fighting crowd, were accidentally drowned and crushed to death.

In the afternoon, however, there arrived on the spot a band of soldiers, mounted and armed, who galloped up to help the police. The mob was infuriated. They stabbed the horses, fired off their old firearms, and did their best to unhorse the soldiers. At last the order was given to fire, and the soldiers fired into the mass of desperate people, many of whom were pushing and screaming with no idea of rebellion, only struggling to reach safety. On the far side of the canal was a great crowd of terrified people, innocent of any evil intention, who had drawn together with curiosity to see the fight, and now were only anxious to get to their homes in safety; but at times like these there is no chance of distinguishing between innocent and guilty: the mob must be dispersed at any cost. Suddenly the soldiers turned and faced this crowd. They held their guns ready to fire, and commanded every one to go on their knees and hold up their hands. Then, while the guns were still pointing at them, the crowd were ordered to get up one by one and go home. They all obeyed. If there had been one rebel voice the volley would have been fired. But even after they had gone, there were many desperate roughs left behind. The fight went on for several days; the canals were crowded with barges bringing the dead to burial and the wounded to hospital. In the end the forces of the law overwhelmed the roughs, and their feasting was stopped.

Amsterdam is entirely built on piles. Piles are long stakes of wood driven into the mud, to make a solid foundation for buildings. They are wedged in closely, and so strongly that the heavy buildings stand upon

them for centuries. Venice, the beautiful Italian water city, is built in this way. In Amsterdam the houses offer much variety of architecture. In many of the grander ones each pane of glass is of a different colour. These windows date back to a time when glass was a luxury for the rich, and made in such small quantities and so unevenly that a standard quality could not be maintained. The various tints—mauve, yellow, green, and grey—are thrown up by the white muslin curtains behind the windows. Most of the streets by the side of the canals are paved with little red bricks, and each household washes its own little piece of frontage, so that the whole is kept as clean and fresh as the floor of a dairy. The people in Amsterdam do not wear the pretty clothes which make the Dutch peasant such a charming sight. They dress very badly in ordinary sort of clothes, such as we see here every day. The women have not very pretty figures, and the men cannot help looking ugly in their badly-made suits. Added to this, they are not very kind to strangers, whom they stare at in the most embarrassing way, so that Amsterdam is not the best place to stay in if you want to get a true and good impression of the country.

In The Hague people are much better dressed, better looking, and better mannered; but, then, The Hague is scarcely Dutch. It has not the disagreeable qualities of many Dutch towns, and its good qualities are due to its being on the sea, so that many nations are represented there.

Some of the small towns in Holland are very pretty, but their inhabitants are not quite worthy of them.

In Zeeland there is a little town called Middleburg, which takes a very high place for attractiveness, as it is pretty in itself, and many country people in their dairy costumes come in from their farms to sell their milk and butter, and their gay colours brighten up the streets.

Another town, called Kampen, has a bad name for stupidity. The country people speak of Kampen as a town inhabited by duffers, and every story of foolishness is supposed to come from Kampen. The tale goes that when the inhabitants built their town-hall, they gave a great banquet to celebrate the opening. The building seemed very fine, and the party of notabilities walked round about it, and looked it up and down, and finally agreed that, though it was a splendid edifice, there was something curious about it, though they could not discover what it was. A cook's assistant arrived that day from Amsterdam, and peered out of the tent where preparations for the feast were busily being made. He came back grinning. "Their town-hall has no windows!" said he; and, true enough, that was the reason of its odd appearance. The architect had forgotten to put in windows, and all the wise heads of Kampen had been unable to discover it!

Another story of something the same kind is told of Edam, a little town quite near Amsterdam, in North Holland. In it is an enormous church, but the only entrance to the church is a tiny door in the side: for the architect did not discover until the building was completed that he had forgotten to make a door!

CHAPTER XI

WRITERS AND ARTISTS

Though Holland is such a little country, and has had to fight for her existence against mightier nations and her enemy the sea, yet she is the mother of many of the greatest men the world has known in every branch of art and knowledge. You have seen that she had fine men as leaders of her forces on sea and land. Of Dutchmen celebrated in literature, there was Erasmus, who came to England in the sixteenth century, and who was a friend of Sir Thomas More. Grotius and Boerhaave were other great writers. Thomas à Kempis, the inspired young monk who wrote the "Imitation of Christ," was a Dutchman. Father Cats, who wrote during the latter part of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth, was a Dutch author who is still continually mentioned and quoted. He is principally known by his proverbs, his fables, and his amusing little stories, each of which has a moral. He wrote almost entirely for the people, and his work is as essentially for all time as is Shakespeare's, or, to go much further back, Æsop's "Fables."

Multhatuli, who died quite recently, was a writer who for many years held a responsible position in the East Indies, where Holland has very important colonies. His books gave a great insight into the life of the native people, and through him many of the abuses and sufferings of the natives were remedied. The Dutch author that I should most like you to know is a certain Frederik van Eeden, who, amongst many other works, may count one of the most delightful children's books that has ever been written. It is called "Little John," and so far it has not been translated into English. The story is about a lonely little boy, who lives in a large house with his father, and, as he has no companions, he makes friends with animals. One day a fairy makes him quite tiny, and gives him the power to talk and understand the language of birds, beasts, and insects, and the tale is of the adventures of Little John amongst the flowers and grass and in the rabbit-holes. There is no book like it in English, except "Peter Pan," and I hope some day that I may get it translated into English, so that English children may have the delight of wandering in a wonderful new land with the "Kleine Johannes."

These are only a few of the best-known Dutch authors. There are others—learned writers, whose works you will perhaps never see, and whose names would be difficult for you to remember—that I cannot mention.

With regard to artists, no translation from Dutch into English is necessary. The language in which they have expressed their feelings is the same in all countries

and all times. Holland has given birth to far more than her fair share of painters of genius, and you will hear the work of her sons praised and discussed frequently as you go through life.

Amongst the earliest painters are the great religious artists Memling and Van Eyck. They belong to what is known as the Flemish School. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Holland owned many artists of the first rank, whose works are admired all over the world. One of them was Jan van Schorel, who died in 1538, and who painted some wonderful pictures of a procession of pilgrims who travelled from Holland to Jerusalem in the sixteenth century.

Another was Frans Hals, who has no rival in painting, if we except Rembrandt. Frans Hals was a very jovial, fat man, who had plenty of money, many children, and a wife as fat and good-natured as himself. He was in his way a religious man, and he never omitted, when saying his prayers at night, to beg that God might take him to heaven. His pupils knew of this, and they also knew how fond their master was of this life and all its good things. His bed was in his studio, and one day they tied ropes to the posts, which they passed through pulleys in the ceiling. Frans Hals went to bed very contented and cheerful after a good supper and plenty to drink, and piously repeated his usual prayer. As he said it aloud, he felt his bed gradually moving up and up, heavenwards. "O Lord," said Frans, in a terrible fright, "don't take me to heaven yet!" The mischievous students let him down with a bang, and I think for a time Frans went to bed

a little more sober. He was born in 1580, and died in 1665. His wife lived on after him for many years.

Jan Steen was another of the same kind. He painted for his amusement, and tried to exercise the trade of a brewer as well. From being a brewer, he came down to being a tavern-keeper, and I am afraid he was his own best customer. When he had drunk himself poor he took to painting, and paid the bills to his wine-dealers in pictures. Though the subjects of his pictures are often convivial, his method of painting is wonderfully delicate and refined.

Gerard Dow was a great artist, born in 1613. He was a pupil of Rembrandt, but it would be difficult to guess this from his pictures. His detail is wonderful. He is said to have spent a week over the painting of a hand. He died in 1676.

Pieter de Hoogh also lived at this time. Like many great Dutch artists, he painted pictures of everyday life. He was particularly fond of putting a spot of brilliant colour in his simple scenes.

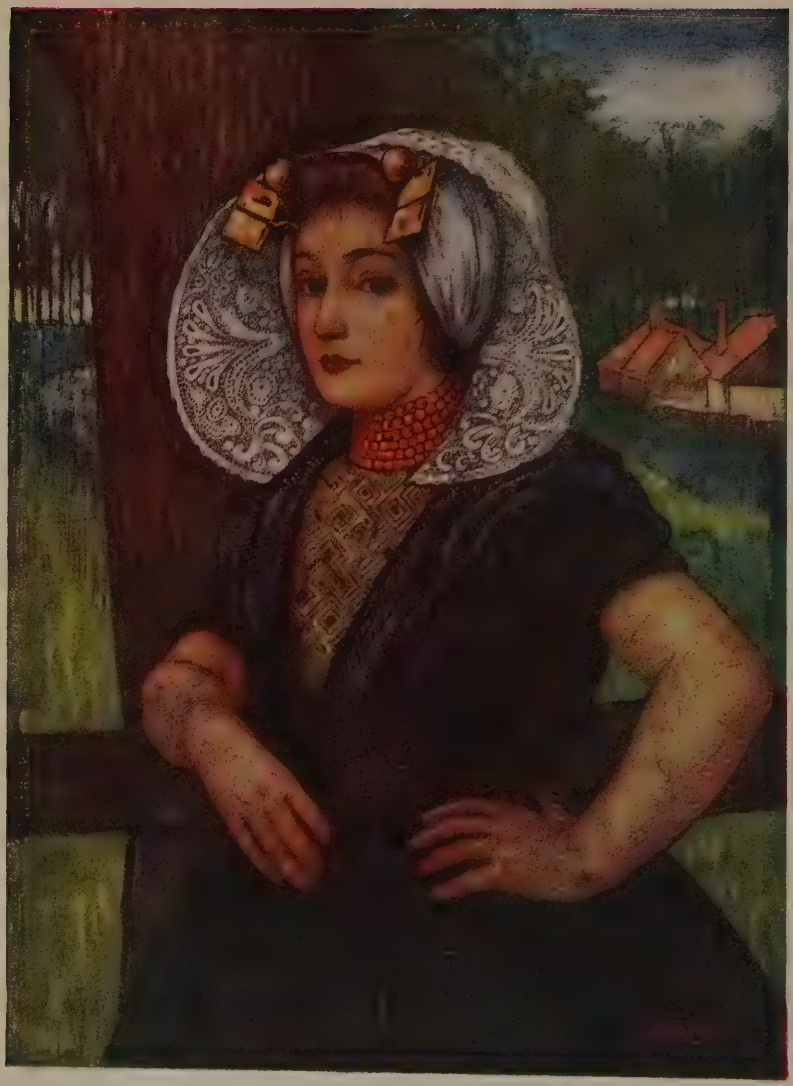
Van der Helst was a pupil of Frans Hals, and a great portrait painter.

Albert Cuyp, who lived from 1605 to 1695, painted landscapes with animals.

Nicolaas Maes, who was born in 1632, was Rembrandt's best pupil. He painted interiors and simple folk at everyday occupations.

Van Meer of Delft, who lived from 1632 to 1675, was another of these Dutch geniuses.

And I am sure you have heard of Rembrandt van Rhjn, born at Leyden in 1606, for he was Holland's



A GIRL WEARING A LACE CAP. PAGE 70.

greatest painter. His father was a miller. He sent his son to the University to study law, but the boy showed no desire to pass his time in study and recreation. He made up his mind to devote himself to painting. His father was sensible enough to give way, and Rembrandt went into the studio of a painter called Van Swanenburgh. He was then about sixteen years old, and was already so clever that his parents soon sent him to Amsterdam. However, he knew more than all his masters there, so he returned home, and started painting on his own account. In Leyden he worked and gave lessons for seven years, when he again went to Amsterdam, where he painted most of his great masterpieces. It is impossible to describe these in this short book, but I may mention "The Night Watch," "The Lesson in Anatomy"; and in the National Gallery in London we have one or two portraits of himself, a wonderful picture of an old woman, and several others. I told you that Leyden was the birthplace of this marvellous genius, and it is curious that Leyden does not own one single example of her great man's work. However, there are in the museum 10,000 stuffed birds! Perhaps this compensates the people of Leyden for the lack of Rembrandt's pictures. What do you think?

Once there was a competition between two Dutch artists as to which of them should produce the most realistic picture. They both painted the most lifelike subjects they could, and then, when they were ready, the judges came to decide between them. The first picture was a dish of fruit, so real that the birds flew

to peck at it. All those present admired this so much that the artist felt sure of his success. The judges turned to the other picture with pity, for they felt that it could not equal the first one. A curtain of rich, heavy tapestry hung before it. The judges waited for the artist to expose his work. As he made no movement towards it, they said among themselves, "He is overcome with his rival's success; he feels himself hopelessly beaten." The first artist, confident of the result, and already triumphing over his competitor, put out his hand to draw aside the curtain. But it was no curtain! It was simply painted on the canvas, and it was so real that it had deceived everybody! The story does not say who was pronounced the winner.

Dutch painting is not a thing of the past; there are many great artists of the present day, though none of absolutely first rank. Among these are Joseph Israels, who paints fisher life principally; Anton Mauve, a landscape painter; Mesdag, a sea painter; Breitner, one of the greatest of Dutch impressionists; Blomers, who paints the life of peasant and fisher folk; and there is a wonderful family of three brothers—Jacob, Willem, and Matthys Maris, all artists. Jacob Maris was the painter of Dordrecht; Willem Maris is a landscape painter; Matthys Maris is a painter of romance. The last named lives almost entirely alone, wrapt in his dreams and ideals, and his work is immensely admired by many enthusiastic art lovers.

CHAPTER XII

A DUTCH FARM

When I was living in Holland, my husband and I had an adventure, which I will tell you about, as it will give you some idea of the home life of the farm folk and of their practical kind-heartedness. It was in the spring of the year. We were taking a long country drive from a village in one of the southern provinces in Guelderland. We passed through some miles of pretty country, which had apparently just recovered from the flood. Many fields were carpeted with wild flowers. Among them were violets, daffodils, lilies of the valley, wild hyacinths, and others strange to me. On both sides stretched plantations of young trees, each row separated from the next by a tiny canal. I longed to get out of our cart and wander through these fields and woods, picking sweet spring flowers. It was a glorious day, and I thought it would be much more pleasant to saunter about in the sunshine than to continue jolting along. So we dismissed our cart, despising the warnings of our driver that the weather would change and that the fields were unsafe. Soon he had disappeared in the distance, and triumphantly

we started, bent on gathering the fragrant treasures which seemed to be wasting themselves in this lonely spot. All went well enough on the borders of the small woods, although the ground was little else but mud. We jumped the stream and gathered the flowers happily enough, keeping the main road in sight. But once in the fields a spirit of adventure seized us. Far away across acres of green meadows we saw a farm-house, with its thatched roof looking like softest velvet, surrounded by many picturesque out-buildings. Cows were grazing in the fields between us and the farm-house, and the sight of these reassured us that here at least the ground had recovered from the floods, for where cows could walk I naturally concluded we could follow. Besides, I felt tired enough already to rejoice in the prospect of a rest and a glass of milk at the farm-house, where also we could certainly secure some kind of vehicle to take us to our destination.

Accordingly, we struck out. But to go in a straight line to the farm we soon found was out of the question. Frequently we had to make long détours to find the little bridges in order to cross the narrow canals which serve the purpose of dividing the fields, as our hedges do in England. The ground was soft, and soon our boots were heavy with mud. The farm-house was still a long way off when we came to a piece of water with irregular banks, and with grass and dandelions half covering its surface. Evidently it was not a dividing canal, for it was too uneven and too narrow; but to avoid it would take us a long way round, so we jumped it. We then found out for certain that it was

not a canal, but a dip in the lately flooded field, and the water extended much farther than it appeared to do, the treacherous grass and flowers concealing its extent. The impetus of our jump placed us in a far worse position than if we had waded through, for we landed on all-fours in a deep bath of liquid mud, and when we managed to scramble to our feet we were standing in a quagmire nearly up to our knees. We gazed at each other, and, in spite of our sad plight, laughed. In truth, we must have presented an amusing spectacle, for we were covered with the rich black mud and decorated with weeds, in which were visible various crawling water insects. We scrambled out slowly and trudged along, and often our feet almost stuck fast in the mud. The sun was disappearing, and all the warmth and brightness of the spring day was over. The evening, dull and cold and grey, was upon us, and we were chilled to the bone in soaking clothes.

We were two forlorn and draggled creatures when we at length reached our goal and walked up the neat paths leading to the bright green door of the farm house. A little row of sabots outside spoke of the immaculate cleanliness of these farm-house interiors, whose occupants invariably leave their sabots outside and walk about in their stocking-feet.

In answer to our timid knock, a comely woman, wearing the gold cap which told us that she had been a native of North Holland, opened the door. She threw up her hands at the sorry sight which met her eyes. We explained what had happened, and she took us in

hand as if we were two naughty children. She and her daughter, a pretty girl of sixteen, led us to an outhouse, and helped us to get off our boots and the various articles of clothing we could spare. She seemed relieved when we had thus divested ourselves of the outer covering of mud. Her husband, a burly, good-natured man, decorated with as many gold buttons as could be found room for on his velveteen coat, took charge of my husband, and she led me to a very cold and severely furnished parlour, and out of various roomy chests she dragged equally roomy garments, which she wrapped round me. I gladly followed her to the kitchen, or living-room, where she dosed me with a warm drink compounded of rum and lemons, which her daughter had been preparing. Then my husband appeared in a complete suit of the farmer's best clothes, which were many sizes too large. His appearance tickled the family mightily.

I slept that night for the first and only time in one of the cupboard-in-the-wall bedsteads which I have mentioned. It was stuffy, and, tired as we were, we did not sleep well. Our sleep, such as it was, came to an end at five o'clock in the morning, when various noises betokened that the family were astir. My husband wrapped himself in a blanket and cautiously opened the door leading to the kitchen. The father, the mother, and the daughter, who was an only child, were sitting at breakfast with the farm servants—a simple meal, which consisted of bread and cheese and coffee. The strange apparition at the door was greeted with laughter and suppressed giggles ; but my husband stood

his ground, and explained that we should be glad to have our clothes in order that we might get up and dress. Upon this our garments, dried and brushed, but bearing unmistakable traces of yesterday's adventure, were brought to us, and we dressed ourselves as best we could in our somewhat shrunken attire.

Possibly it was just as well that there was no mirror, otherwise our appearance might have given us some qualms. A piece of mottled soap was the only toilet accessory supplied by the good people. They may have had a comb, but we did not feel tempted to borrow it. Our simple and primitive toilet completed, we bashfully entered the huiskamer, or the living-room, which was unoccupied except by the vrouw, or farmer's wife, herself. It was a picturesque, low-ceilinged room, its oak beams decorated with various joints of pig, hung where the smoke from the peat fire might reach them. Right under the enormous chimney were suspended strings of small dried fish, and a kettle was hanging by a heavy iron chain over a peat fire, which was burning with a clear, soft glow, and giving forth a warmth most comforting to our still weary and aching bodies. We drew up chairs to the hearth, and watched the hostess preparing our breakfast. The coffee had been ready for some time, and the bright brass pot containing it was standing on an earthenware vessel full of burning embers. This stand, called a test, is sometimes made of metal; but the earthenware stands, being of many shapes and colours, and brightly glazed, are much more attractive. The more substantial part of our repast consisted of cheese and coarse bread, and, by

way of delicacy, slices of black rye bread, which, although heavy and not prepossessing in appearance, is said to be wholesome. Our coffee we took without either sugar or milk, and very strong. It was not palatable, but at least it was stimulating, and we were too much chastened to be anything but thankful for whatever our hostess chose to give us. She was really as kind as possible.

During our breakfast we became very friendly with her and her husband, for the farmer had come in to have a look at us and to inquire how we had slept. Our meal ended, he took us all over his farm, showing us his well-kept stables and cowsheds and his stock vehicles. Some of the latter were very old and quite beautiful in design, and included a gilt and carved sleigh of the Louis XV. period, which had been made for one of his ancestors. We visited also the brightly-tiled dairy, where the milk was gleaming in big blue basins; and also the churn looked like a very tall, brightly-coloured, narrow barrel. The method of churning is rather peculiar. A piece of wood is cut the same size as the barrel and evenly perforated. This is fastened to a long pole. It is then inserted in the barrel and moved up and down with great regularity till the butter comes.

In the cowshed we duly admired the beautiful sleek cows, and pitied the poor calves destined for the butcher. These unhappy creatures are boxed up in a sort of wooden cage against the wall, which does not allow them any movement, and thus they are kept and fed for weeks, until they are fat enough to fetch a good

RIDING IN A HORSE SLEIGH. PAGE 72.

price in the market. Doubtless the system answers its purpose, or it would not be adopted; but one would think that the veal would be none the less wholesome if the poor animal were allowed a little liberty during the few weeks it has to live. Veal is deemed the most delicate and even the most nourishing meat in Holland. Far from being considered indigestible, it is generally ordered for invalids, and is always provided on festive occasions. I must admit that it appeared to me to be superior to English veal. Possibly this may be owing to the cruel method of fattening, just as the fattened and crammed Surrey fowl is infinitely superior to the ordinary barndoor chicken.

Through a door in the cowshed we re-entered the huiskamer, and were regaled with more coffee, this time sweetened with the sugar-candy I have mentioned. I have already said that sugar is dear in Holland, and while on the subject I may add that the salt is remarkably bad in all small towns and villages. It is very coarse, and generally so damp as to make it unpleasant to use. Also one salt-cellar, without a spoon, is considered sufficient to supply the needs of a tableful of people; so, after each person has helped himself with the tip of his knife, covered with gravy or egg, or some other food, the salt is not particularly appetizing.

By the time we had seen round the premises I saw by the delightful old clock hanging against the wall that it was still only a few minutes to nine. It was a wonderful clock. Two painted metal mermaids, generously endowed with curly hair and with wreaths

of what I supposed to be seaweed, bobbed up and down on a painted sea at each swing of the pendulum; and when the clock struck nine in a wheezy and bored tone a dolphin appeared above the horizon and gravely bent his jointed head nine times, presumably in salutation to the beauteous mermaids, who ceased their monotonous movement while the clock was striking—perhaps I ought to say while the dolphin paid his hourly respects to them. The farmer and his wife were delighted at our admiration of their clock, which was evidently a household god.

The vrouw thereupon showed us all her treasures—various jewels belonging to her cap and clasps for her necklace, then the caps themselves, then her great-grandmother's gold cap, which was preserved as a family heirloom, while she and her daughter possessed similar ones. These golden caps, which are costly, are beaten out to fit each individual head, and have a hole at the top for ventilation. They are generally given to girls at the time of their confirmation; they are very striking when worn without any covering, as is the case when the women are occupied about their household duties. They are polished to an extreme pitch, and reflect the surroundings of the wearer in the quaintest manner, and seen with the sun's rays striking on them they are quite dazzling.

We were called upon to admire the ironing-boards hanging on the walls, the backs of which are elaborately carved and decorated. Then the family Bible was brought out and duly admired. It was reverently taken from its resting-place, in the depths of a fine old

mahogany press, and the outer covering of white linen removed. It was an enormous volume bound in dark leather, its corners and clasps of heavy hand-wrought silver. We opened it carefully. It bore the date 1708, and contained the record of the farmer's family from that time. It had the marks of frequent use. With a touch of sentiment one would not have looked for under such a phlegmatic exterior, the good lady drew from between the leaves of the Holy Book a lock of soft golden hair cut from the head of their little dead son—the only boy they had had. With tears in her eyes, and quivering lips, she told us the sad troubles they had gone through. Six children had been born to them, and of all these only one girl survived. The farmer sadly shook his head, and told us how hard he felt it that he had no son to inherit his well-stocked farm and carry on the old name when he himself should have passed away.

We tried to cheer the old couple by talking of the good marriage their pretty daughter would be sure to make. In the days to come their house might be filled with merry grandchildren. This cheerful view of the situation seemed to brighten them up, although the farmer still spoke sorrowfully of the passing away of the old name which had been associated with the farm for nearly two centuries.

After all these confidences, especially considering that the family were well-to-do, it was a difficult matter to think of offering payment for their hospitality. When we spoke of hiring a conveyance to take us to the nearest town, at a distance of some fifteen kilo-

metres, we suggested payment, but were assured that we must not think of offering any. Indeed, with the greatest tact and good-breeding, our hosts told us that our involuntary visit had been a very welcome event in their quiet lives, and that at any future time they would be truly pleased to see us, if we would go so far out of our way as to pay them a visit. I am quite sure that they meant what they said, and that if ever we again visit that out-of-the-way spot our welcome will be hearty.

We felt inclined to bless the adventure which had led to our being taken into the bosom of this typical Dutch family. After more coffee, the farmer harnessed two horses to his most pretentious carriage, a covered vehicle on four wheels, and we made our grateful farewells to the vrouw and her daughter. With much hand-shaking, we mounted the carriage, and off we drove in fine style. We had an uneventful drive to the nearest town, and the sturdy Flemish horses got over the ground at a good pace.

We created quite a sensation at the little hotel, where the farmer was evidently well known. Our adventure was related by him, and discussed with interest before the undersized and underbred townsmen, who were smoking their strong cigars and playing billiards in the little café where our good friend had lunched with us. His simplicity and natural courtesy only emphasized the uncouth behaviour of the group, who watched our every mouthful, and did not scruple to sit at the same table with us, puffing their rank smoke down our very throats, laughing boisterously

at the coarse jokes the more witty ones made at our expense, as the farmer, good, simple soul, told his tale. At last the trying meal came to an end, and our friend left us, loaded with kind messages and hearty thanks to his wife.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD COSTUMES

It is strange that Holland, which is a very progressive little country, should still be conservative enough to keep its old fashions in dress. In England such a thing as any kind of national costume has ceased to exist. The last trace of it to linger was the smock-frock worn by the country people. In certain parts of Wales, I believe, peasant women occasionally wear the high hat and loose cape of old times, and in the Highlands the kilt is worn. In France the Bretons—at least, in the more out-of-the-way parts of Brittany—wear a special costume, though in most cases it is very simple, and in Norway, Sweden, Spain, Italy, and other countries, you still see a small number of country folk who have had the sense to keep to their characteristic and suitable clothes, instead of exchanging them for cheap and badly-made imitations of the fashions of to-day. But the whole of Western Europe put together is not so rich in this matter as the one little country of Holland. On a journey through this land you may meet with at least two hundred varieties of national costume, each including a cap, quaint or beautiful, and these costumes are not isolated examples,

but are worn by the whole population of a village. Of late years the Dutch people seem to have changed their minds in regard to this matter, and the parents, dressed picturesquely and charmingly in quaint clothes, are encouraging their sons and daughters to adopt the ugly costumes of modern times, so I am afraid that in one or two generations more much less will be seen of the national costume of Holland.

However, certain villages may retain it, for their dress is an outward sign of their religion, and therefore not given up so easily. In Volendam, for instance, a particular costume is worn by all the Catholics, and as the population is almost entirely of this faith, nearly every one wears the same style of clothes. The few people who are in ordinary dress are members of other Churches. In Marken, an island close to Volendam, but opposed to it in every way, all those who wear a special costume are Lutherans.

The people who are advocates for giving up the old dresses say that they are expensive, inconvenient, and ludicrous. On this point every one must judge for himself.

One of the prettiest details is the cap, which hides the hair and makes a frame for the face. It has, as you can imagine, a very refining effect. Think of the little servant-girls and the factory-girls of England, with their big fringes and their vulgar hats, and contrast them with the Dutch peasant-girl who is sensible enough to wear a beautiful point-lace cap. The nicest face must look common under the former conditions, and the coarsest is redeemed by the latter.

But we must pass on from this fascinating subject to other details in the daily life of the people.

Every Dutch boy is encouraged to keep pet doves and pigeons. The people believe that the presence of a pair of turtle-doves is a safeguard against rheumatism.

The lads build quaint little houses for the birds, and train them carefully, even teaching them the somewhat mean trick of decoying other birds to become inmates of the gaily-painted pigeon-house perched on the roof. The boys' taste for the decorative art finds further scope in the dog-kennels and hen-houses, the sides of which they paint to represent a carefully-laid brick wall, with neatly-curtained windows. The entrance to the dog-kennel is often a brightly-painted door with bell and knocker; it even has its name-plate, while the gabled roof has chimney-pots and a weathercock.

There is little difference between the habits and customs of Dutch and English children. All the Dutch games bear a strong family likeness to those of the English; but, from the natural conditions in Holland, there are some sports in which the Dutch children excel, while in England there is no opportunity for them. Take skating, for example. As I have said, every Dutch child, almost from babyhood, is an accomplished skater, and quite little children manage their roughly-made sleighs with wonderful cleverness. A favourite sport in the winter is sailing in ice-boats. A sleigh on long runners has affixed to it a big sail, and, properly managed, these boats glide along the ice at an enormous rate. The big Zuyder Zee is often frozen over, and offers a magnificent surface for these sports;

FARMERS STRIKING A BARGAIN. PAGE 82.

but it is so large and so uncertain that it is very dangerous to trust oneself off the tracks that are made by expert skaters. An Englishman who was staying in a hotel at Volendam started skating alone from Volendam to Marken, and though the safe road was carefully marked and continually tested, he preferred to go his own way. By the merest chance, a Dutchman was also skating off the track, testing the safety of the ice on each side. Thinking he heard faint sounds of distress, he skated in that direction, and was only just in time to save the man, who must otherwise have been drowned.

When the Zuyder Zee is frozen like this, the poor fishermen have a hard time. Sometimes three or four of them will cut a big hole in the ice and fish in it; but this is an occupation carrying with it as much risk as ordinary fishing in the stormiest weather, for should a sudden thaw come, the ice on which they are resting may crack, and, before they know it, the fishermen be carried away to the North Sea on an island of ice. How terrible it would be to see it slowly melting away, and to know that no rescue was possible! yet every winter fishermen take the chance, almost invariably with fatal results to some of them.

Not long ago came the terrible news of the sinking of the *Berlin* off the Hook of Holland. The night was so rough that the steamer, quite helpless for a moment, was dashed against the pier and broken clean in two. There, in sight of land, over a hundred people perished; the few who remained on the wreck were saved after the most heroic efforts on the part of

the Dutch lifeboatmen, helped and encouraged by crowds of willing assistants, including the husband of the Queen. Three women were left on board; they refused to trust themselves to the rope along which the other survivors had taken the road to safety, and even the brave lifeboatmen could think of no other means by which to effect their rescue. At this point a Dutchman, whose name, Captain Sperling, will be remembered amongst those of the heroes of the world, faced the terrible sea which had so nearly won its prey, and, at the risk of his life, climbed on the wreck, and succeeded in saving the three wretched women who preferred to face death where they were rather than try to escape by the dangerous methods which had saved the lives of their companions in misfortune.

The wreck of the *Berlin* was a great disaster, and was bewailed all over the civilized world. Alas! every winter from the fishing villages all round the coast of Holland go forth little bands of fishermen, intent on earning bread for their families in the midst of the dangers of the sea. Every winter there are many boat-loads which never return. The wives and sweethearts wait and watch as long as they may, and at last are obliged to give up hope. But the fate of these poor men is so common that nothing is heard about it; no relief funds are started, no royal sympathy reaches their mourning relatives and friends; yet the tragedy of the sea is as sad in their case as in the case of a great wreck like that of the *Berlin*, the magnitude and suddenness of which calls attention to it all over the world.

This same raging sea looks calm and peaceful in the summer ; then, level and brilliant as a sheet of glass, it slowly laps the sandy breast of Scheveningen and other beautiful seaside towns, so that the smallest toddler shows no fear of it, but plays confidently with the terrible waves that have swallowed up innumerable lives.

CHAPTER XIV

DUTCH CHEESES

THE Dutch use little coal as fuel. It is very expensive it has to be brought from afar ; and besides this, they have in their own country a splendid substitute. This is peat, a fuel used all over Holland. It is generally found in marshy and boggy countries. The greater part of that burnt in Holland comes from Groningen, one of the northern provinces. Here the digging and preparing it for use is a regular industry, employing thousands of labourers. It is dug out, or rather cut out, with a sharp-bladed spade. With each stroke an even slice is dislodged ; these sections are built up in stacks, roofed, and left to dry. It is then loaded on big barges, to be sent along the canals to all parts of the country where it is needed.

The peat-cutters work transversely across a field, so that there are only two three-cornered pieces in each field—all the rest are square. If anyone finds in the scuttle one of these triangular corner pieces, they say it is a sign of the unexpected visit of a stranger.

It is wonderful fuel, this peat ; it gives out a peculiar odour, not unpleasant, and makes a thin, blue smoke.

Left to itself, it burns slowly under a covering of grey ashes, which hide all the glow, leaving one to suppose that the fire is out ; but burnt fingers soon teach one not to trust to appearances in this respect.

Each fire has its doofpot, a very handsome copper vessel with a brass lid. Instead of being allowed to smoulder through the night, the half-burnt peats are stuffed into this receptacle, and the tightly-fitting lid excludes the air, quickly extinguishing the fire. These half-burnt lumps of peat enable the Dutch vrouws to light their fires with great rapidity in the mornings. Good-sized blocks of peat are sold at the rate of ten a penny, so that warmth is not such an expensive luxury for the very poor in Holland as it is with us in England where a hundredweight of coal costs at least shilling.

In the province of Drenthe peat is also found, but there it is not so carefully looked after and cut as in Groningen. Wide vistas of moor stretch as far as eye can reach, and human habitations are few and far between.

In parts of this desolate province are a miserable race of beings who live entirely in low huts, slightly scooped out of the ground and built of peat, the interstices being filled with mud. These people, who are little more than savages, earn a scanty livelihood by manufacturing rough brooms from a sturdy kind of heather which spreads around them on all sides as far as eye can reach.

The women go about only partially dressed, wearing little else than a ragged skirt and a loose blouse much

open at the throat, bare-headed and bare-legged. In the winter they hibernate in their close, stuffy little hole of mud and peat, sustaining themselves on the store of potatoes collected during the better seasons of the year. These people, living far out on the moors, have not yet been reached by the wave of civilization; and, though rather wild and shy, their intense simplicity has an attraction of its own. We came across two old people living together in an overturned gipsies' cart without wheels. The van had been their home for twenty-five years, and potatoes their unvarying diet. Knowing nothing better, they lived peacefully, their only anxiety the growth of their potatoes, and their labour reduced to digging these and cutting patches of turf for fuel. What an intensely lonely life! It must have been very rarely that they saw a human face, and the only sound which reached their ears was the distant tinkle of sheep-bells as the flocks wandered over the moor.

Limburg, in the south-east corner of Holland, is a province which is obviously intended by nature to belong to Belgium or to Germany. It stretches away from the rest of Holland, and it is quite unlike the country it belongs to. It has been called the Garden of Holland, but why it should be considered to have more right to that title than many other delightfully fertile spots I do not know.

In the south the country is hilly and very beautiful. In the environs of the capital, Maastricht, there is an extraordinary series of excavations in the soft sandstone. They cover a considerable area, and a gruesome

collection of human skulls and bones tells a melancholy tale of the fate of many adventurous spirits who lost their way, and finally their lives, in this subterranean labyrinth. These caves are very ancient, and were much used as hiding-places during the great wars which ravaged Holland in the earlier days of its history. In this province is manufactured most of the china used in Holland.

The farm-houses are large, rambling buildings, in which stables, cow-houses, and dwellings are roofed under one velvety thatch. There is nothing much to be seen in the way of costume beyond the simple white Flemish caps.

One of the chief industries of Holland is the making of cheeses. This takes place chiefly in North Holland, and one of the chief centres is the old city of Edam. The farms round Edam are large and rich in pasture. The cattle are black and white, and look like the animals out of a Noah's ark as they stand silhouetted against the grey sky. They are not merely ornamental, however. Almost all the farms are engaged in cheese-making, and, although the industry is not confined to this part of the country, the description of one farm is practically the description of all. There are no unpleasant revelations to be made concerning Dutch cheese-making. The whole process is carried through with the most exquisite cleanliness.

One is always welcome to visit the farms and to watch the simple primitive methods. The good housewives take the keenest pride in their picturesque interiors, bright with shining brass utensils and the

highly-polished, if cumbersome, pieces of furniture which constitute the family heirlooms.

The farm-houses are large, square, one-storied buildings. The roof rises high, and the large space between the ceiling of the dwelling part and the angle of the roof is utilized as a granary for the storage of fodder sufficient to last through the winter months.

The living-rooms are always on that side of the house which faces the inevitable canal, and a flower garden with sanded paths brightens the approach to the door. On the other three sides are the dairy, the cow-house, and the coach-house. The stables are in an out-building. The cow is the pampered darling of a Dutch farm. When the summer wanes and the nights get chilly she is warmly clothed in blankets, and when the cold weather comes she is brought in for the whole winter—and she comes to a very sumptuous apartment! Her tail is carefully tied up to the ceiling by means of a pulley, so that the end may not get dirty. But this is not done so as to inconvenience her; she can lie down in comfort. The surroundings are so beautiful that you would wonder how such a result could be obtained outside a toy cow-house. Treasures of old delf plates, bright brass utensils, the highly-glazed brown bowls, and the bunches of peacocks' feathers adorn the beams of the stable. The walls are of bright green and red tiles, and the floor is paved with bright glazed tiles, which look as if they were washed down every hour. What a contrast to an ordinary English cow-house!

When the curd is prepared, it is put in moulds, of which the lids are pierced, and left in the cheese-press

A DUTCH FARM. PAGES 59 AND 60.

for fifteen hours. The Dutch farmer, despising all modern inventions, continues to use the ancient cheese-press of his fathers, which is entirely worked by hand. The next process is the salting of the cheese, which takes from ten to fourteen days, according to the size. Then the cheese is well rubbed with melted butter to prevent any cracks in the rind. Lastly, it is washed in vinegar, and then allowed to lie for a month or so to ripen. One morning, after being rubbed with linseed-oil to improve their colour, the cheeses are piled in a boat or on a dog-cart—this is a real dog-cart, that is to say, a cart drawn by dogs—and thus find their way to one of the big markets.

I believe that Alkmaar is the most important cheese-market of to-day. At any rate, it was there we followed the golden balls whose transformation from milk into cheese we had watched with so much interest. We got there on a Thursday night, for Friday is the market-day, and rose at six in the morning, for no hours of daylight are wasted.

When we arrived at the market we found that cart-loads and boatloads of the cheeses were fast arriving from all the neighbouring farms and villages. On the high-wheeled carts, painted yellow, blue, and green, stood peasants throwing the big round cheeses from hand to hand in the act of unloading them. It was like a gigantic juggling performance. At last the cheeses were all piled up in great pyramids, which seemed to cover the whole market-place.

The actual buying and selling was not in full swing till about ten o'clock. There was an extraordinary

amount of hand-shaking, and I thought to myself, "What a friendly feeling there is between the silk-capped buyers and the sturdy farmers!" Not content with one good shake, they again and again grasped each other by the hand with amazing heartiness. But I found it was not altogether a sign of goodwill, but only because no bargain is considered to be completed without at least three hearty hand-shakes.

When the greater number of the cheeses had passed from the makers to the merchants and exporters, a group of new-comers appeared, adding a note of colour to the brilliant scene. These were the porters, dressed in white linen and wearing straw hats of yellow or green or blue. Every couple carried a kind of wooden stretcher of a colour similar to that of their hats.

The competition among the groups of porters was quite exciting. When sixty or eighty cheeses, each weighing about four pounds, were built up in a pyramid on the stretcher, it took all the strength of the robust young Dutchmen to lift it from the ground. Once started, they swung along at an amazing rate to the public weighing-machine, and then to the spot indicated by the buyer of the cheeses. It was not the buyer, however, but the man who sold, who paid the porters, at the rate of twopence for every hundred pounds. By midday the sale was almost over, and both buyers and sellers turned their thoughts to dinner.

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